

SENIOR EXPERIENCE OVERVIEW:

Each student in the Aberdeen School District is required to complete Project ME including the Senior Experience. This portfolio fulfills one of the Washington State requirements to earn a diploma (See WAC 180-51-061, Footnote #8). Project ME consists of the student demonstrating both their learning competencies and preparations related to Washington State learning goals three and four:

- Goal 1: Read with comprehension, write with skill, and communicate effectively and responsibly in a variety of ways and settings
- Goal 2: Know and apply the core concepts and principles of mathematics; social, physical, and life sciences; civics and history; geography; arts; and health and fitness
- Goal 3: Think analytically, logically, and creatively, and to integrate experience and knowledge to form reasoned judgments and solve problems**
- Goal 4: Understand the importance of work and how performance, effort, and decisions directly affect future career and educational opportunities**

Philosophy

Project ME was established by the Aberdeen School District as a graduation requirement in order to assess student achievement related to Washington State Learning Goals 3 and 4. This portfolio is intended to highlight a student's journey through life and to be a celebration of his or her learning and growth. The final section, the Senior Experience, consists of three components: a proposal, a journal, and a reflective paper. These components integrate valuable skills and knowledge allowing students to demonstrate their readiness to graduate and to develop an understanding of the importance of contributing to one's community.

Objective

Whether students are planning on entering the work force immediately after high school or entering it after they complete some formal training, we know that effective communication -both in speaking and writing- is necessary. We also know that citizens must be able to reason critically, acquire and use information, work well with people, behave honestly and ethically, and use the resource of time effectively. The Senior Experience is a fitting conclusion to a student's education because they are expected to demonstrate that they can write, speak, and organize information and time around a topic that they have selected.

Why Project ME and Senior Experience?

Why did the Aberdeen School District choose to add Project ME to the existing graduation requirements? Following the passage of state legislation (House Bill 1209) that initiated school reform efforts in Washington State, every school district was charged with helping all students achieve four learning goals. These goals require students to go beyond recalling facts and applying set formulas. Performance assessments like Project ME require students to demonstrate their ability to apply what they have learned and show that they are prepared for work and/or further education.

What is the Senior Experience (SE)?

The Senior Experience is an opportunity for students to utilize and further develop their skills in area of a career, personal or community focus through a commitment of at least **25 hours**. This experience is designed to incorporate elements of service learning.

This self-directed learning experience involves creative and critical thinking and integrating experience and knowledge to form reasoned judgments and solve problems. The Senior Experience requires documentation in which a student discusses the importance of the learning and anticipates how performance, efforts and decisions will be applied in the future. Criteria for success in the experience requires documentation of the student's learning, initiative, resourcefulness, and perseverance by an approved mentor who will provide a written performance evaluation of the student's work. An experience journal completed by the student will be submitted with the performance evaluation.

Required Documentation

1. Proposal Letter (pg. 17.4)
2. Mentor Vita (biography) (pg. 17.4)
3. Parent Consent form (pg. 17.6)
4. Experience Journal (pg. 18.1)
5. Mentor Verification Form (pg. 18.2)
6. Senior Reflection (pg. 24.1)

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Expectations

Honesty and integrity are important character traits we hope to reinforce throughout the Senior Experience. While we fervently hope we will not have to perform administrative consequences, we want to make clear about consequences of cheating on the Senior Experience. In the Senior Experience **we define cheating as:**

- Lying about or exaggerating the quality and/or quantity of the time spent working on the experience; inventing or exaggerating a mentor relationship; forging signatures.

Monitoring of Progress

The Aberdeen School Board requires that each school develop procedures and checkpoints to document each student's progress toward completion of Project ME. Students will need to follow the established timelines and due dates established by AHS. A deadline for meeting the standard on Project ME components will be established by AHS. Students will not be awarded a Certificate of Academic Achievement (diploma) until all of the graduation requirements are met. Meeting a deadline requires students to turn quality work in on-time that meets district standards. Students completing all of the graduation requirements after the published deadline may not earn their diploma, nor participate in the commencement ceremony.

Intervention and Remediation

Aberdeen High School will offer multiple opportunities within a reasonable time frame to revise and resubmit Project ME work in order to meet standard. AHS will notify student(s) and parent(s) if the student is not on track to complete the requirements.

Project Parameters

Parent/Guardians are asked to certify that they understand what their student plans to do for their Senior Experience. The student's senior advisor must give approval for the Senior Experience. Work done for a course that receives high school credit cannot be used for the Senior Experience. Senior Experiences must comply with parameters established by the Aberdeen School District Risk Management Pool, federal and state law, and the policies and procedures of the Aberdeen School District. Although students, when designing and working on their Senior Experiences, are encouraged to challenge themselves in original and creative ways, certain hazardous activities are prohibited. The district has the right to reject any project that is judged to be unsafe.

The Senior Experience need not cost any more than a typical school project. Schools are not responsible for funding any expense incurred during the Senior Experience. While projects may require some expense, the district encourages students to work within their means. During the planning phase, students will be encouraged to develop a reasonably accurate estimate of costs, and parents are asked to plan accordingly.

Out of District Transfer Students

All out of district transfer students will be required to complete components of Project ME and specifically the Senior Experience. Required Project ME components for transfer students will be determined following the transfer. Students who transfer into the Aberdeen School District after October 15th and are given senior standing, will develop an individualized plan identifying any necessary accommodations needed for them to meet Project ME requirements. Each student's plan will be developed with input from the student, advisor, and the parent/guardian.

Running Start or Equivalent Programs

All students who participate in Running Start or other equivalent programs are required to complete Project ME and meet their building requirements. Students who intend to participate in these programs need to plan carefully to ensure completion of Project ME within their school's published deadlines.

English Language Learners (ELL)

All ELL students will have an individualized plan identifying any necessary accommodations needed for them to meet Project ME requirements. Each student's plan will be developed with input from the student, ELL instructor, parent/guardian and the student's advisor.

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities may require accommodations and/or modifications to complete their work. Student IEP's or 504 plans will detail how each student will meet Project ME requirements. The plan may include input from the student, parent/guardian(s), Special Education teacher(s), advisor, counselor and general education teacher(s) who are familiar with the student's needs.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Can I work with another student on my Senior Experience? **YES**
2. What happens if I do not meet a deadline? **YOU JEOPARDIZE YOUR GRADUATION!**
3. What if I decide I do not want to continue with my approved Senior Experience? **YOU WILL HAVE TO COMPLETE THE ENTIRE APPROVAL PROCESS AGAIN.**

HOW TO GET YOUR SENIOR EXPERIENCE APPROVED:*(Brief statement of steps)*

- Step 1:** Identify a problem or need **based on research** that is related to a career, personal or community focus of your choice and discuss your ideas with a guidance counselor, teacher, your parent and/or Project ME advisor.
- Step 2:** Identify a mentor who would be willing to advise you through your experience and be able to verify your experience hours.
- Step 3:** Complete the required documentation:
1. Proposal Letter addressed to the Project ME Advisory Board
 2. Vita of Mentor (biography or biographical sketch). Must include the following information:
 3. Parent Consent Form (17.6)
- Step 4:** Submit the required documentation to your Project ME advisor.

STEP 1: Choosing a Senior Experience

The Senior Experience is about choosing with your heart and mind! This is a chance to choose what interests you and to put together a Senior Experience. Sometimes though, making that decision is a little easier said than done. Consider the following:

- Does the research enhance your experience idea- is there a clear connection between your research and experience idea?
- Does the experience require a learning stretch (*the act of making great demands upon one's ability while gaining knowledge, comprehension or mastery through experience or study*)-is this something that goes beyond what you already know how to do? Will it take you out of your comfort zone?
- Does this experience look like it will reasonably fit the minimum required time frame of 25 hours (please refer to timeline)
- Is the experience something you will do OUTSIDE of the regular school day?
- Will the experience involve tangible evidence of your work through either a performance or product?
- Is the experience something that requires attendance in a class?

You will want to make sure your experience fits into one of the following categories:

1. **Career Focus:**
An experience that ties directly into a career you have been researching.
For example:
 - Designing an informational poster about Teen Pregnancy (Career Interest: Obstetrics)
 - Developing an after-school study program for elementary students (Career Interest: Teaching)
 - Volunteer work with the Habitat for Humanity (Career Interest: Construction)
2. **Personal Focus:**
An experience that ties to a personal passion.
For example:
 - A family member has been struck with cancer and you lead a team to raise money for the Relay for Life
 - You've experienced domestic violence and organize a support group
3. **Community Focus:**
 - Graffiti has been deteriorating our neighborhoods and the police guild has requested help. You apply for a grant and organize a group effort to remove the graffiti.
 - The local homeless shelter is in need of clothes. You organize a clothing bank at school.

STEP 2: Choosing a mentor

What is a project mentor? A mentor is "a wise and trusted counselor or guide". Your mentor will be your most valuable resource. He/she must be a practicing professional or someone well versed in the field. He/she will provide you with the advice and feedback necessary for you to complete your project successfully. The quality of your project will be directly affected by the choice of your mentor. Your mentor will be contacted by a Project ME Assistant.

What is the role of the mentor?

- Provides expertise, good advice, support and positive feedback in your focus area.
- Evaluates your experience and must be willing to complete your verification forms and contacts the advisor to confirm your participation

Before you choose a mentor:

- Clearly define your experience proposal; be clear and specific about what you expect from your mentor, including the time commitment.
- Be able to show how entering into a mentorship will benefit the mentor

Who is NOT a mentor:

- A fellow student at AHS or any other school
- A recent graduate -within five years.
- A parent or close family member (one of the purposes of a mentorship is to connect you to the larger community)
- A teacher at Aberdeen High School

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STEP 3: Complete the required documentation

In order for your proposal to be reviewed the following documentation must be submitted.

Proposal Letter (see 17.5 for example)

In this requirement, you will demonstrate the skill of writing a business letter with correct format and conventions, such as you might use in the future when applying for a job. You will word process this letter and turn it in without errors to your Project ME advisor. Later, you will include it in your finished portfolio. Your letter must be written as follows:

Introduction: Describe your overall proposed experience. Tell about your background knowledge in this area, and explain why this will be a learning stretch. (A learning stretch is the act of making great demands upon one's abilities while gaining knowledge, comprehension, or mastery through experience or study.)

Identification: Identify a problem or need with proof from a primary source that the need or problem exists. What does the research say?

Action Plan: The action plan describes in detail how you plan to complete your experience. Identify obstacles to overcome. List the skills and knowledge needed to complete your experience and necessary steps. How will you manage your experience?

Conclusion: Pledge to work with honesty and integrity by copying this paragraph **verbatim** into your letter, understanding this letter is a contract.

"I understand that honesty and integrity are important characteristics of an upstanding citizen. As such, I will demonstrate these qualities by committing to accuracy and honesty on all parts of my Senior Experience; this means I will not plagiarize any of the written portions, and I will not lie about, or exaggerate, any part of the 25+ hour portion of my experience. I know that those who cheat will not participate in commencement exercises, and possibly will not graduate at all."

Finish your letter with a statement of your understanding the consequences of cheating on this experience and sign in black ink

Mentor Vita (aka resumé or biography)

In a separate document, please provide us with a typed copy of the mentor's vita. Describe your mentor by addressing the following details:

- Name
- Place of employment/job title
- E-mail address
- Work and/or home phone
- Your reason for selecting this mentor
- Age (must be at least 23)
- Years of experience in the focus area
- Mailing address
- If or how you are related to this mentor
- Also include your name

Parent/Guardian Consent Form (page 17.6)

Parents/Guardians are **highly encouraged** to read pages 17.1-17.4 prior to signing their student's consent form. This form acknowledges the parent/guardian's understanding of the requirements, guidelines and standards, acceptance of responsibility for selecting the mentor and consents to the student's Senior Experience choice.

STEP 4: Proposal Submission to Project ME Advisor

In order for the Advisory Board to review your submission; make sure you have all (3) required documentation, place them in the following order: Proposal Letter, Mentor Vita and Parent/Guardian and staple your documents together. You're Project ME advisor will submit all proposals to the Advisory Board.

AHS Timeline

Proposal for summer submission June 6, 2008
Other dates to be announced

**Failure to meet any of the above deadlines may jeopardize a student's eligibility to graduate.

s.e. proposal

Your house number and street
City, State, Zip Code
Date

← 2 lines

Project ME Advisory Board Members
C/O Ms. Barbara Page, Project ME Coordinator
Aberdeen High School
410 North G Street
Aberdeen, WA 98520

← 4 lines

Dear Advisory Board Members:

I have been interested in cars for as long as I can remember, but I am becoming more aware of what an environmental mess they make. I want to research alternative power sources for cars and make a working model of one of these sources. I have been through all of the automotive classes here at AHS, but have no experience dealing with anything but gas and diesel engines. It will be a huge stretch for me to learn about clean fuels, to learn what I need to know to build a working model, and to find the parts.

To determine the reliability of my sources I will make sure they are current, make sure that they have reputable authors or sponsoring agencies (like the Department of Energy), and make sure that the names used in one source also appear in other sources. I will be on the lookout for bias from the automotive industry because they have so much at stake. In a recent national survey commissioned by the Consumer Federation of America (CFA), a large majority of Americans expressed great concern about the nation's dependence on oil imports. They see this dependence as increasing gas prices, threatening future gas supplies, and funding terrorism.

I plan to complete my experience by researching the different alternatives for powering cars. Once I have completed my research, I hope to construct a prototype model using an alternative source and share my findings through a Powerpoint presentation to all Automotive students at AHS. I anticipate there will be many obstacles in particular the construction of the prototype. That is where I will really need the help of my mentor to give me some guidance.

"I understand that honesty and integrity are important characteristics of an upstanding citizen. As such, I will demonstrate these qualities by committing to accuracy and honesty on all parts of Project ME (which includes my Senior Experience); this means I will not plagiarize any of the written portions, and I will not lie about, or exaggerate, any part of the 25 hour portion of my experience. I know that those who cheat will not participate in commencement exercises, and possibly will not graduate at all". I also know that I want to end my high school experience on a positive note, so I would not want to cheat myself out of this opportunity.

Sincerely,

← 4 lines

Jill A. Zimmerman 4 Lines

Parent/Guardian Consent Form for the Senior Experience

Student Name: _____ Advisor Name: _____

As a parent/guardian of a senior at Aberdeen High School, I am aware that my son/daughter, to fulfill graduation requirements to the quality standards as defined in the enclosed rubrics, must successfully complete the Culminating Project (Project ME Portfolio) which Includes the Senior Experience.

I also understand that the completed portfolio must be turned in on the due date listed on the calendar and timeline, so that my son/daughter may participate in the board presentations. If this deadline is not met, he/she may not participate in Senior Boards and could jeopardize his/her commencement ceremonies.

I understand that the Senior Experience is not to take place during class time. Students must schedule Senior Experience appointments so they do not conflict with academic classes. We encourage students to take advantage of Summer Break. Senior Experience absences would be considered unexcused and would result in consequences as stated in our attendance policy.

Furthermore, I agree that students who decide to cheat on any part of the Senior Experience will not participate in commencement ceremonies.

For the Senior Experience to be completed outside of the school day, my son or daughter has decided to:

I have entirely read pages 17.1-17.4 of the Project ME portfolio and fully understand that this experience decision is made completely independent of the staff and administration of Aberdeen High School. My student and I fully accept responsibility for selecting the experience and mentor,

Please name mentor: _____

subject to the guidelines and standards of the Senior Experience. I recognize and agree that the district is not responsible for any possible risks that might exist in the student participating in such activity or any cost that might be involved.

Parent/Guardian Name <i>(Please Print)</i>	Parent/Guardian Signature <i>(Please sign)</i>
Date	Phone number and best time to call
Email address	